Unique Tale of One Unfortunate

It Had a Costly Sequel, as This Narrative Will Prove.

AN EASY VICTIM IN A VILLA

The Real Fact Was That the Alleged Maniac Was a First-Class Specimen of the Modern, Every-Day Bunco Steerer.

From the French.

I live in a delightful little villa at Auteuil. It stands with its pretty garden in an unfrequented street. It is, indeed, the home of a poet.

One hot day in June I was playing the violin when there was a knock at the door, and a man wholly unknown to me came into the room. He appeared to be about 50 years of age; he was small, well built and muscular. He sat down without ceremony on a sofa. I did not feel much reassured. He took off his hat and revealed a gray head that inspired respect.

"Pardon me, monsieur," he said to me, in a sad voice, "for coming in without being properly announced. I am a neighbor of yours and make bold on that account. I adore music and heard you playing, and I had a keen desire to make your acquaintance."

"A crank," I thought to myself.

"Your violin has a remarkable tone and you play with great talent."

Alas, for human vanity! This compliment caused my distrust to vanish.

"I possess an excellent violin," I said, "It is an Amati."

The stranger took the violin and examined it on both sides.

"It is one of the best I ever saw," he said. "It is worth 3,000 francs."

"I know it is a rare violin," I said. The stranger took it up and drew the bow across the strings.

"It is not my instrument. I play the violincello. When we know each other better, if you permit it, I shall be very happy to have some music with you."

"That will be easy," I said. "I play the piano a little."

"I live in a cottage not very far from your own. What were you playing just

"One of Mendelssohn's quartets."

"What a great artist he is."

"I prefer him to Beethoven."

"So do I, monsieur we have the same tastes. If I were not afraid of being indiscreet I would ask you to continue playing. You play with so much expression."

How can a man resist a request so complimentary? I took up my violin.

"You cannot have heard me properly, monsieur; my playing is very commonplace."

"I don't know how well you play, but I know, monsieur, that you feel what you play. That is everything in art."

I began the adagio, putting my whole soul into it. When I finished I noticed that the stranger was inspecting all the objects in the room. He turned to me.

"That was beautiful," he said; "how well you rendered the great master's thoughts. I thank you, and once more beg you to forgive the freedom with which I introduced on your privacy. I am rather eccentric; I have suffered so much."

The stranger put his hand to his head.

"I lost the wife whom I adored," he went on, "and, moreover, in the most horrible circumstances, I have been mad for a long time.

My apprehensions began to return and I nuoticed a peculiar look in the man's eyes.

"I am cured now," he went on, "and I seek to forget in the pursuit of the fine arts. You are sympathetic. I will tell you my story. The secret I shall confide you is a terrible one."

Hum! I thought. He's going a bit too fast for me.

"'Sir," I replied, "I do not desire to receive painful memories."

"It will relieve me," he said. "I was 22 years old and possessed of a good name, an independent fortune and everything that was necessary for success in the world.

"I went about that time to stay with the D'Anfreville family, who lived in a superb castle in the environs of Paris in the Brie. The Marquise D'Anfreville was the father of two ravishingly beautiful girls, Zoe and Denise. Attracted by their charms I often went to the house, and soon became an intimate friend of the family. I loved them both and had no preference for either. Soon I discovered that both girls were in love with me.

"The situation was most embarrassing.

"My visits became more and more frequent, and the greatest intimacy existed between the young girls and myself. After much hesitation I decided in favor of Denise, the younger, and asked her to marry me. The grief of Zoe was immenes. She concealed it, but from that moment bore toward her sister the most bitter hatred. The marriage was celebrated with princely functions and attended by the most select society of Paris. Zoe was stoical; she feigned indifference, but the pallor of her face betrayed her and threw a cloud over my happiness.

"As soon as the cefebrations were at an end I left for Italy with my young wife. I spent there the happiest days of my life. I worshipped Denise, and was at the summit of my ambition. After six months' joy without a single trouble to mar it, we returned to our parents-in-law. Zoe received us with great warmth. I thought she had got over her grief and felt reassured. Some time afterward Denise began to lose her health. She had strange attacks of sickness accompanied by pains in the head. She grew thinner and weaker and her character began to change. She became nervous, irritable, fanciful.

"The old family doctor came to see her every day. He asked me odd questions, and I thought his old age had destroyed his judgment and made him fanciful.

"Denise grew worse and was obliged to take to her bed. Her sister's devotion to her was beautiful; she never left her bedside.

"I was beginning to despair. One evening, when Zoe was out of the room, Denise took my hand. 'George,' she said, 'I am lost!'

"I cried aloud.

"'If you only knew," she continued in an excited voice. 'It is horrible! I am dying, and I have been poisoned by my sister!'

"'It is impossible! You are raving!'

"'Last night I saw her pour out the poison; she thought I was asleep.'

"'It is awful!'

"'She is jealous of my happiness, and wants to become your wife. Swear to me that you will never marry her.'

"She took me in her arms, and, while I gave the promise, she fell back dead.

"It were useless to describe to you my grief.

"Zoe came in. I seized her by the neck, and, dragging hr to th bd, I confrontd her with my dead wife.

"'Miserable girl!' I cried, 'behold your work. I know it all.'

"She threw herself at my knees and confessed her crime, saying she had done it because of her love for me.

"'I shall not give you up to justice,' I said. 'I cannot disgrace both your family and my own. It would kill your parents. You must disappear so that I can never find you again, or else——'

"'I will disappear,' she sobbed, 'I promise you; I will disappear for forever.'

"The next day she was found dead in her bed. She had taken the poison—the same poison that she had given to her sister.

"The two sisters left me all their property.

"I had hoped that all was over. Zoe dead, the horrible secret was known only to me. I could count on the old doctor. On my way back from the cemetery he touched me on the chouldder.

"'Monsieur le Comte,' he said to me, 'I present my compliments to you; you understand well the uses of poison.'

"'What do you mean?' I asked.

"'I mean that your trial for murder will raise quite a disturbance. I had before my suspicious of the cause of your wife's death; today I have proofs. I have analyzed the contents of the bottle which you used to poison your sister-in-law.'

"'What? You accuse me?' I cried. 'You think I poisoned the wife I adored? For what purpose?'

"The old doctor smiled sardonically.

"'See whom their deaths profit,' he said, 'You have come into the property of the victims. But that is not my affair; that is for the judge to decide.'

"I was astounded! Not only would the scandal I dreaded break out, but I myself was accused of the most horrible crime. The appearances were against me. It was enough to send me out of my mind."

At this point the stranger said:

"What would you have done in my place, monsieur?"

"Mais, monsieur," I stammered. "I really cannot say."

"I did not hesitate," he went on; "I confessed. I had my plan."

"'Doctor," I said, 'I am a very guilty man. But I do not wish my crime to cover with shame two old and honorable families. I will kill myself."

"'Tres bien,' said the doctor. 'You still have some good sentiments. On that condition I will tell nothing.'

"I asked for time necessary to put my affairs in order. He said he would accompany me, and stepped right into the trap I had laid for him. Having said farewell to my grandparents, we took the train togother for a station in Sein-et-Oise, near an estate that belonged to me. As the train drew near the station I suddenly opened the door and pushed the old doctor, who was asleep, onto the track. It was quite dark. I had laid my plans. The doctor rolled under the train and the wheels passed over him.

"The train stopped. I called for assistance. The doctor's body was a mass of blood and bruises. I declared that he had tried to get off the train while it was in motion. No one doubted me. He was dead and I was saved!"

The stranger ceased speaking. I, for my part, felt very uneasy. He wiped his brow and continued:

"So much emotion had turned my poor head and I became mad, as mad as a hatter."

He rose.

"You have my secret," he said, in a hoarse voice.

"I did not ask you for it, sir. After all, you only annoy me."

"One of us is de trop," he cried threateningly.

He advanced towards me with staring eyes. I retired prudently behind the piano, because I knew that I was dealing with an enraged madman.

"I am going to throw you out of the window." He shook the curtains of the windows that looked out into the street. At the same moment there was a ring at the bell, and I ran to open the door.

A gentleman, well dressed and groomed, came in. He wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor and was followed by two gigantic fellows in blouses.

"I am Dr. Maxfestown," he said, with a slightly foreign accent. "I am the director of a private lunatic asylum, and one of my patients has escaped. According to the information I have received, he has concealed himself I your villa.'"

"You have made no mistake, sir; you have come just in time," I replied greatly relieved.

"God be praised! It is the Count Martini, an unfortunate man, who went mad after his wife's death. He imagines that she was poisoned."

"And he wanted to throw me out of the window."

"That is his mania. We will at once relieve you of him. I ask a thousand pardons for the annoyance he has caused you."

He pointed to the two men in the blouses.

"Two of my assistants," he said. We went into the drawing room. The madman seemed greatly agitated.

"He is going to have an attack," declared the doctor.

"Doctor," cried the madman, "this man is going to denounce me. I must have his life."

He made a rush at me. The two big assistants, not without difficulty, restrained him, and one of them took a strong cord from under his blouse.

"Your presence irritates him," said the doctor to me. "Would you be so kind as to conceal yourself while we take him away?"

I stepped into the cupboard.

"Oh, monsieur, how good of you. The family of the count will never forget your kindness. They will come to thank you in person."

The doctor closed the door and turned the key. Then I heard sounds of a struggle.

"Quietly, please, Monsieur le Comte." Then followed a sound of moving furniture in my bedroom adjoining. The madman had evidently got away from the two assistants. After some time all became quite again. The madman had evidently been captured.

In the excitement of the moment the doctor had forgotten to restore me to my liberty.

I remained in the cupboard until nightfall.

The wife of the concierge let me out.

"And the madman?" I asked.

"What madman, monsieur?"

Then I saw that my valuable Amati violin, my pictures, my bronzes, and a priceless bracket of Louis XV. had vanished!

I had been buncoed.

Reputation Saved.

Dealer—Where you going now?

Driver—To take this barrel of apples around to Mr. Brickrow's.

Dealer—Good Lands! You'll ruin me. That barrel hasn't been opened.

Driver—Do you want it opened, sir?

Dealer—Of course, you dunce. If we leave it to him to do himself he may open it at the wrong end.

SOMETHING ABOUT PRICES.

Brass in 1840 was $14 a ton.

A cloak, A. D. 72, cost 60 cents.

Paper in 1421 was 25 cents a quire.

In the tenth century razors cost 30 cents.

Charlemagne paid $7 for a pair of shoes.

In 1307 a horseshoe in England cost 14 cents.

In Athens, A. D. 71, oysters sold for 30 cents.

Julius Caesar's everyday tunic cost 24 cents.

The first hand firearms cost about $30 each.

A bed in a Greek inn in A. D. 327 cost 4 cents.

The coronation robes of Napoleon cost $4,000.

In Rome, B. C. 6, roses were a cent a dozen.

In 1375 salt cost, in France, $2.50 a bushel.

A Greek hat in the time of Pericles cost 10 cents.

In 1312 English linen was worth 16 cents a yard.

In Venice in 1274 a pig brought two shillings.

In 1617 a cannon was made at Paris that cost $742.

In 1302 a sheep sold in France for $1; a pig for $2.

In 1296 a hen was bought in Paris for one penny.

Mary, queen of Scots, once paid $2,000 for a dress.

In 1361 apples in Germany were worth $1 a thousand.

In 1504 a pair of shoes made in England cost 20 cents.

In 1594 gunpowder sold for $14 per hundred weight.

Ink, in the days of Louis IX, cost 40 cents a quart.

In 1542 a tanned cowhide in England cost nine shillings.

In 1499 candles sold in Amsterdam for 6 cents a pound.

THE WINDS OF MEMORY.

Upon this western shore tonight I'm sitting,
A shore that slopes to touch a boundless sea,
And watch the white ships inward, outward flitting,
And wonder when my ship will come to me,
And whence it comes or whither it is going,
And only hear the winds of memory blowing.

Across the cliffs of yesterday they're coming,
They fan my forehead with the forest air,
Remembered melodies the hills are humming
The scent of pine trees greet me everywhere;
Again I hear the wayside brooklet flowing
Where all the winds of memory are blowing.

Blow on, sweet winds—your singing or your sighing
Sounds like some long forgotten tune;
Beneath the apple blossoms again I'm lying,
And feel the breath of girlhood's early June;
For life again with youth and love is glowing
While all the winds of memory are blowing.

Upon this western shore tonight I'm straying—
A shore that slopes to touch a boundless sea—
And watch the billows upward, downward swaying,
And do not care how high the waves may be—
Or if the waters touch my feet—not knowing—
While all the winds of memory are blowing.

—Anon.